

TEAR THE PAPER CEILING™

General Activation Guide



Thanks and Welcome to a Chance to Tear the Paper Ceiling Together

Thank you for supporting the Tear the Paper Ceiling campaign! We are thrilled that you share our passion for creating more equitable job opportunities for the more than 50% of workers in the U.S. today who are STARs (Skilled Through Alternative Routes).

The *Tear the Paper Ceiling* campaign is designed to rally employers and STARs to be bold and break through this invisible barrier—the paper ceiling—that comes at every turn for workers without a bachelor’s degree. Through the multiyear public service campaign we’re building, we aim to inspire companies to rethink and remove unnecessary degree screens, biased algorithms, and other barriers that block STARs from accessing higher-wage jobs.

This guide is a starter kit designed to help you engage your company and/or network in the *Tear the Paper Ceiling* campaign. Your support and amplification of this effort is greatly appreciated.

We hope you find the tools provided useful in inspiring people in your network to join us in a collective effort to tear the paper ceiling.

Ad Astra—to the stars!

With gratitude,



Byron Auguste
CEO and Co-Founder
Opportunity@Work



Lisa Sherman
President and CEO
The Ad Council

About the Tear the Paper Ceiling Campaign

THE PAPER CEILING (*n*):
the invisible barrier that comes at every turn for workers without a bachelor's degree.

The lack of alumni networks, biased algorithms, degree screens, stereotypes, and misperceptions contribute to the paper ceiling, creating barriers to upward economic mobility for STARs—even though they have demonstrated skills for higher-wage work.

During this new national campaign—spearheaded by Opportunity@Work and the Ad Council and in partnership with many other organizations— together we will shatter the myth that no degree means no skill and will unite workers and companies to change the status quo by shining a light on the 50% of workers in the U.S. who are Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs). This campaign aims to inspire companies to remove degree screens and other barriers that block STARs from accessing higher-wage jobs. This type of skills-based hiring, sometimes called “skills-first” hiring, can help employers increase the size of their talent pools to find quality applicants for hard-to-fill roles and also levels the playing field for STARs.

Recognizing that we cannot solve the inequities of economic mobility without addressing both the worker and employer sides of the labor market, the campaign speaks to both employers and STARs, encouraging companies to find out how STARs can meet their talent needs and encouraging STARs to break through barriers.

For more on the campaign and how your company can engage, go to TearThePaperCeiling.org.

SECTION

01

OVERVIEW

Who Are STARS?

STARS  (noun)

An acronym to describe the 70+ million workers in the U.S. who are Skilled Through Alternative Routes rather than a bachelor's degree.

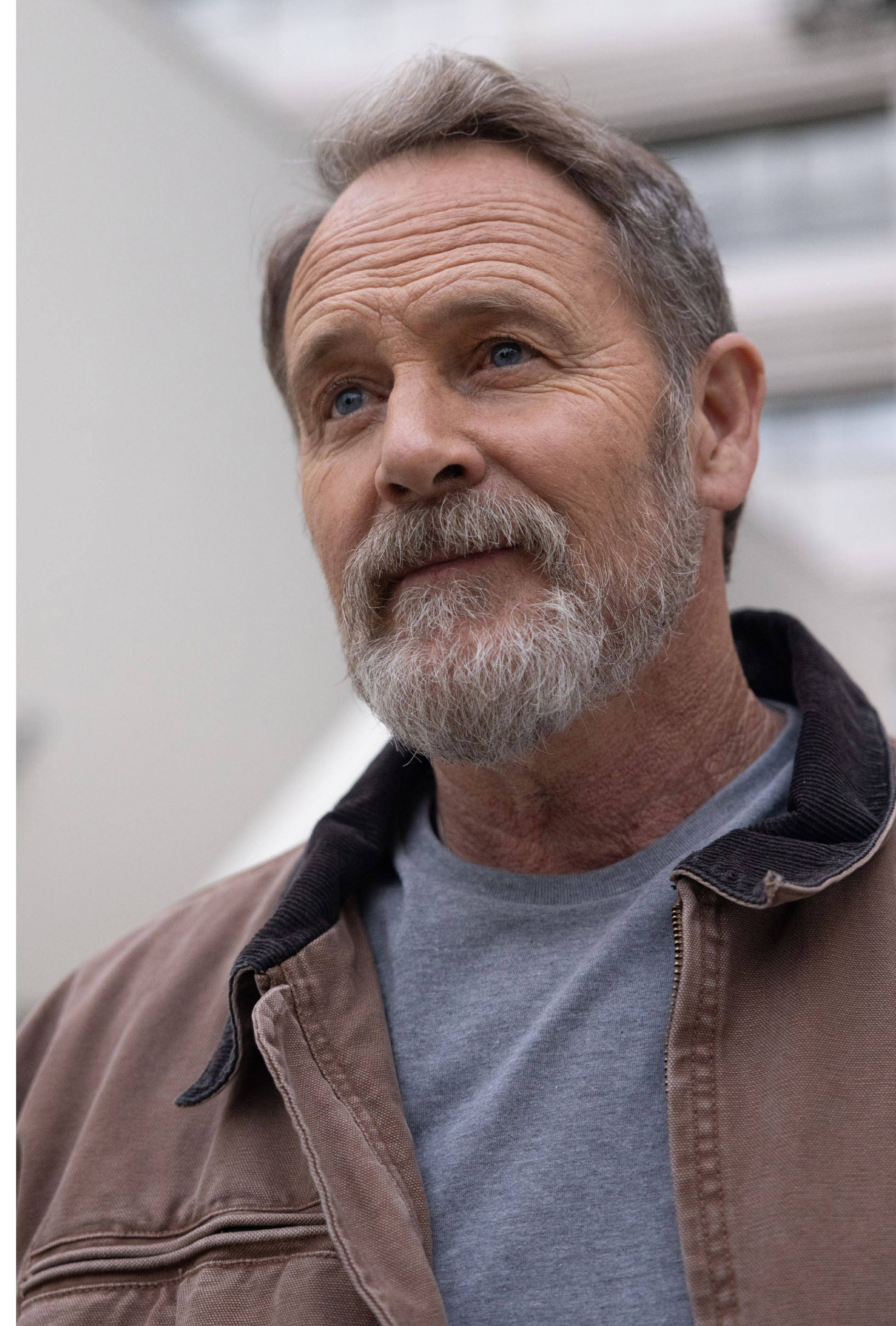
They are the 50% of the workforce that has developed valuable skills through community college, certificate programs, military service, or on-the-job learning.

STARS also reflect America's racial and cultural diversity, comprising more than:

61% of Black	55% of Hispanic	66% of rural	AND	61% of veteran workers ¹
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Yet, despite STARS demonstrating skills for higher-wage work, employers have historically screened out candidates who don't have bachelor's degrees in the pursuit of hiring efficiency.

1. Source: CPS ASEC 2021, IPUMS.



Impact of the Workforce Crisis

STARs have the skills for higher-wage work, but are systematically shut out by the paper ceiling. Hiring practices that rely on bachelor's degree screens, certain types of experience, or personal referrals helped create the paper ceiling. Today these practices, and others like them, perpetuate the paper ceiling, leading companies to exclude a massive pool of quality candidates for hard-to-fill roles in growing fields like healthcare, information technology, customer service and more. They also disproportionately affect STARs, keeping millions of workers with in-demand skills from climbing the economic ladder.

Opportunity@Work research found that:



With degree discrimination on the rise, the wage gap between STARs and workers with bachelor's degrees has doubled over the last 30 years². STARs now earn less – when adjusted for inflation – than they did in 1976, and it takes more than 30 years on the job for STARs to earn the same wage that college graduates earn on day one of their careers³.

1. Analysis of BLS EP and the 2012/2019 CPS ASEC, IPUMS.

2. David Autor, "Skills, Education, and the Rise of Earnings Inequality among the Other 99 Percent," Science, May 23 2014: Vol. 344, Issue 6186, pp. 843–851. David Autor, "Work of the Past, Work of the Future," AEA Papers and Proceedings 2019, 109: 1–32.

3. Rise with the STARs: Building a Stronger Labor Market for STARs, Communities, and Employers." Published by Opportunity@Work, January 2022.



The STARs Collective:

**PARTNERS UNITED IN SUPPORT OF STARS
AND ALIGNED AGAINST THE PAPER CEILING**

The *Tear the Paper Ceiling* campaign is grounded in Opportunity@Work's labor market insights with creative developed by the Ad Council and award-winning creative agency, Ogilvy. But our partnerships don't stop there. To successfully inspire employers to remove hiring barriers that block the majority of workers in the U.S. from earning higher wages commensurate with their skills, this campaign requires a collaborative effort and collective, field-wide approach. It takes companies that will hire STARs, diverse talent developers who help hone and develop workers' skills, STARs who'll speak up and share their stories, researchers to uncover and disseminate new data, and many other partners!

This is why we have galvanized the STARs Collective, a group of more than 30 corporate and nonprofit partners who have already joined the effort to champion the campaign and leverage their influence and reach in workforce development in support of STARs.

CHAMPION

accenture



Cognizant
Foundation

Google

Jobcase

LinkedIn

McKinsey
& Company

Walmart

workday

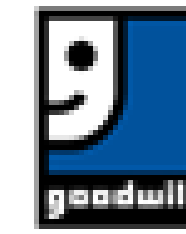
Additional Campaign Partners

CONFIRMED TO DATE (SEPTEMBER 15, 2022)

ALLY



SUPPORTER



Timeline and Next Steps

The initial launch period for this campaign will go from September 2022 to March 2023. This launch period includes three phases, with each serving a distinct purpose:

2022				2023		
Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Heavy up on building awareness and a community of supporters		Follow up to sustain top-of-mind awareness and engagement		Giddy up: re-establish the campaign with a second heavy up push		

It is important to note that Tear the Paper Ceiling is a multi-year campaign that will extend beyond the initial launch period—with additional outreach strategies and campaign goals—in an effort to make the greatest impact possible for STARs and this movement.

This activation guide provides the assets and tools necessary to activate during the initial launch period.

More information on how you can support the efforts beyond the initial launch period will be forthcoming.

SECTION

02

KEY MESSAGES AND STARs STORYTELLING

Key Campaign Messages

TOPLINE MESSAGE:

This fall, a new national campaign will shatter the myth that no degree means no skill. We are uniting workers and companies to change the status quo by shining a light on the 50% of workers in the U.S. who are Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs). We aim to inspire companies to “Tear the Paper Ceiling,” the invisible barrier that comes at every turn for workers without a bachelor’s degree.

SUPPORTING MESSAGES:

For detailed supporting messages related to the scope of the campaign, how it helps employers, and how it helps STARs, [download this messaging doc.](#)



Topline Message:

This fall, a new national campaign will shatter the myth that no degree means no skill. We are uniting workers and companies to change the status quo by shining a light on the 50% of workers in the U.S. who are Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs).¹ We aim to inspire companies to “Tear the Paper Ceiling,” the invisible barrier that comes at every turn for workers without a bachelor’s degree.

Supporting Messages (External):

Scope of Campaign:

- The multiyear national public service advertising campaign aims to expand upward mobility for the more than 70 million workers in the U.S. who are Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs), such as community college, workforce training, bootcamps, certificate programs, military service, or on-the-job learning, rather than through a bachelor’s degree.
- Recognizing that we cannot solve the inequities of economic mobility without addressing both the worker and employer sides of the labor market, the campaign includes creative assets to target both STARs and employers.
- This campaign will pair Opportunity@Work’s labor market insights with creative developed by the Ad Council and award-winning creative agency Ogilvy. Like the Ad Council’s many iconic national public awareness campaigns, such as Friends Don’t Let Friends Drive Drunk, Smokey Bear, and Love Has No Labels, the *Tear the Paper Ceiling* campaign will be supported with a fully integrated communications plan and donated media from partners that spans mass media, including broadcast, out-of-home, social media, targeted digital advertising, earned media, and other channels.

How this Helps Employers:

- Employers in need of skilled and diverse talent can access the 50% of workers in the U.S. today who are STARs by removing barriers such as bachelor’s degree screens and adopting skills-based hiring practices.
- The STARs campaign is a field-wide effort, supported by a broad collective of leading companies and workforce organizations. More than 40 partners have joined the coalition, including Accenture, Google, IBM, LinkedIn, and Walmart. We’re aiming to continue to grow this coalition with members across the business, nonprofit, policy and academic fields to support and amplify the campaign throughout the multiyear effort.

How this Helps STARs:

- Currently, STARs face an invisible barrier—the paper ceiling—which unfairly creates barriers to their economic mobility, even though they have demonstrated skills for higher-wage work.
- By adopting skills-based hiring practices, we open the door to more jobs where STARs can pursue pathways to higher earning and let their skills shine.
- Additionally, given that 61% of Black workers, 55% of Hispanic workers, and 66% of rural workers of all races are STARs, creating more equitable opportunities for STARs creates more paths to success for more Black, Hispanic, and/or rural workers.

¹ All estimates are from the 2022 Opportunity@Work “Rise with the STARs” report unless otherwise noted. <<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1loW21jjOc3XY-oSm1JFIgNvUm5hS2HTr/view>>.

Sharing STARs Stories

Individual stories of STARs who have torn through the paper ceiling are an integral part of this campaign that will help bring the campaign to life and show that we can all make a difference in championing this talented group of workers.

Here are some examples of compelling STARs stories:



LaShana Lewis
FOUNDER AND CEO OF
L. M. LEWIS CONSULTING

“I had tried for many years to get jobs in the tech sector, only to be told that I could not get a job because I did not finish the degree. I was never tested on my technical skills or made it past the first interview.”



Justin Hutchinson
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT,
THREESIXTYEIGHT

“What makes me, it’s not the achievements and the accolades. It’s my spirit, my soul. And when I sit in on peer interviews, I don’t care about a person’s paperwork. I want to know, what has life taught you? Who do you care about? I want to know about their ability to persevere.”

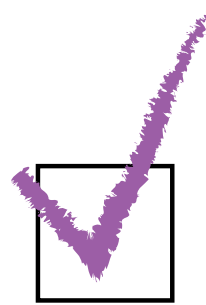


Samantha Hernandez
AUDIOLOGY PRACTICE
COORDINATOR, UCSF HEALTH

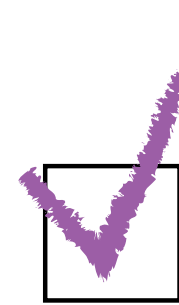
“All my aspirations and dreams had to go on hold for my daughter. But I just pushed myself. I wanted my kids to learn to never give up”.

Guidelines for STARs Storytelling

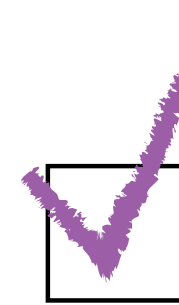
STORIES CAN:



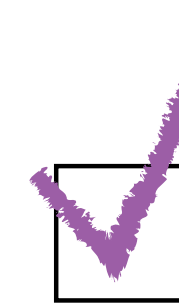
INCLUDE both STARs and their hiring manager, HR rep, and/or senior leadership champion.



HIGHLIGHT an employee within your organization who is a STAR and tell the story of the barriers they have faced in their journey. What were the personal, professional, psychological, and emotional impacts of those barriers?



DEMONSTRATE how your company is helping to tear the paper ceiling for STARs.



FEATURE a variety of voices, occupations, pathways (e.g. military service, certificate programs, etc.) and profiles (e.g. race, age, gender, geography, etc.).

Tips for Collecting STARS Stories

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO ASK STARS WHEN CURATING THEIR STORIES:

- What skills have you developed during your working life and how did you develop them?
- As you've tried to find better jobs, what elements of the paper ceiling have you experienced? (E.g., jobs that require degrees, not knowing anyone at the company, etc.)
- How did it make you feel to run into the paper ceiling?
- If you have been able to tear the paper ceiling, how did you do it? (E.g., acquired certificate, completed a training program, utilized Stellarworx, received coaching from a mentor, etc.)
- What changes do you want to see from others so that more STARS can tear through the paper ceiling?

To download this story questionnaire template, click [here](#).



Tools for Sharing STARs Stories

STARs stories can be shared internally through your company intranet, blog, and/or email communications, as well as externally through your company social media channels and website. Use the story ideas below to craft unique stories that help STARs shine!

SOME STORY IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED INCLUDE:

- A profile of a STAR in your organization
- A practical lesson learned in your skills-first hiring journey
- A reflection from an HR practitioner about a practice they've started to question or change
- An announcement about a new product, service, or program designed to facilitate STARs hiring
- A partner plug—how are you working with another partner organization to advance skills-based hiring and open up more pathways for STARs?



Tools for Sharing STARs Stories (cont.)

Once you have curated your STARs stories using the [story questionnaire](#) and/or [story idea suggestions](#), you can utilize this graphic tool to create inspiring visuals to pair with each story and share through social media.

Click [here](#) for a tutorial that provides step by step instructions on how to create a social story card.

SOCIAL STORY CARD TOOL



Tools and Templates

SOCIAL PROFILE AND PHOTO

In addition to telling STARs' stories, please encourage your network to update their social profile and photo to show support of STARs and encourage others to tear the paper ceiling.

You can utilize a tool on opportunityatwork.org to generate a *Tear the Paper Ceiling* profile photo.

Click [here](#) for a tutorial which provides step by step instructions on how to utilize this tool.

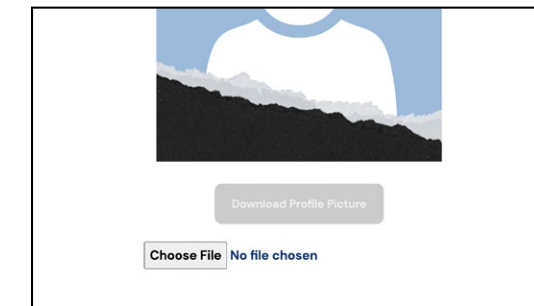


How to Create and Add a Custom Campaign Photo Frame and Background to your Social Media Profile

Adding a campaign photo frame and profile background to your social media profiles is an easy way to tell your followers that it's time to tear the paper ceiling and see the STARs beyond it. If even a small percentage of supporters took this step we could blanket social media with torn paper! It all starts with you. Whether you're a STAR or a supporter, follow the steps below to start tearing your own social media profile.

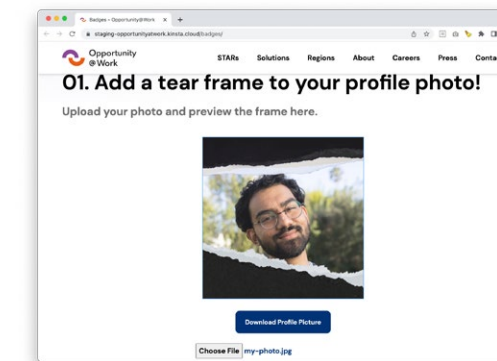
Step 1

Visit <http://opportunityatwork.org/tear-your-social-profile> and click on the "Choose File" button.



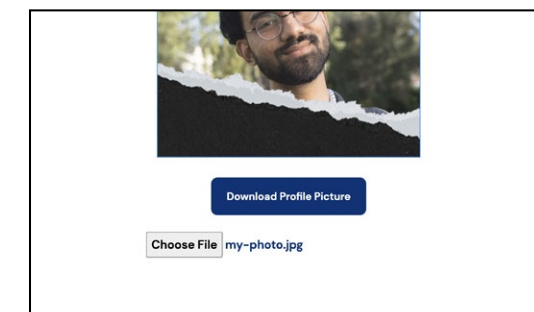
Step 2

Upload and position your photo within the tears.



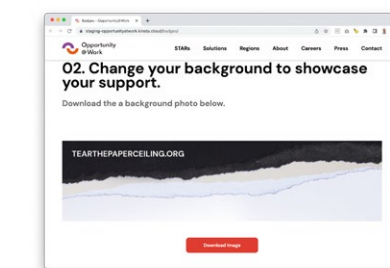
Step 3

Click the download button to save your photo on your mobile device or computer



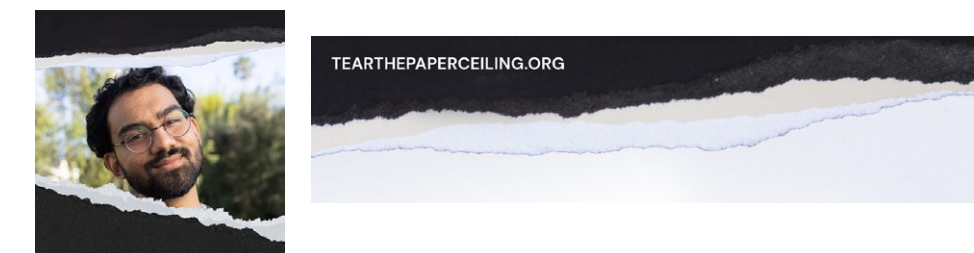
Step 4

Download the profile background to your mobile device or computer



Step 5

Find the graphics in your photos or downloads then upload them to your social media platforms



Tools and Templates

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

In addition to updating your profile photo, please encourage your network to share social media posts on your platforms – LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

You can find social media assets and suggested post copy available for your use [here](#).

**THE
PAPER
CEILING**

(noun): The invisible barrier that comes at every turn for workers without a bachelor's degree.
See also: no alumni network, biased algorithms, degree screens, stereotypes, and misperceptions.

STARs*
SKILLED THROUGH
ALTERNATIVE ROUTES.

ad
COUNCIL

APPENDIX

Opportunity@Work

Mission & Impact

OUR MISSION:

Our mission at Opportunity@Work is to rewire the U.S. labor market so that all individuals Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs) can work, learn, and earn to their full potential.

OUR VISION:

In the next decade, Opportunity@Work aims to enable at least 1 million working adults in America to translate their learning into earning – generating a \$20 billion boost in annual earnings.

OUR BELIEFS:

- We believe in the potential of all people to learn and contribute their talents in our dynamic economy.
- We believe a labor market that is rewired for inclusion creates prosperity for individuals, businesses, and society.
- We believe technology can be used as a powerful tool to drive positive change.
- We believe no one institution alone can create an inclusive labor market.

Reminder of Usage

PLEASE NOTE the photography provided in this Activation Guide cannot be used after 9/21/2024 without the express, written permission of Opportunity@Work.



TearThePaperCeiling.org